

**CITY MANAGER'S  
QUARTERLY UPDATE  
OCTOBER 1, 2005 – DECEMBER 31, 2005**

**Community Outreach by City Manager**

- Attended the semi-annual meeting of the Takoma/Langley Crossroads Development Authority.
- Met with Abraham Kamara of the Help Africa Relief Fund.
- Attended luncheon meeting of municipal managers in Montgomery County.
- Met with Jere Stocks of Washington Adventist Hospital to discuss hospital's planned relocation.
- Attended meeting of Circle Woods Community Association.
- Met with Noise Control Board to discuss future activities of the Board.
- Attended COG CAO Committee Year-End Advance.
- Attended meeting/holiday luncheon of the Maryland City/County Management Association.

**Administration**

- Considerable staff resources continued to be devoted to the Community Center project. In addition to the day-to-day monitoring of the Phase One construction, a great deal of time was spent on logistical details related to the staff relocation process. The process was complicated by the uncertainty of the occupancy permit date, as well as the challenges associated with relocating staff while remaining open for business. All employees housed at the Municipal Building were relocated over a three-day period (October 24<sup>th</sup> through October 26<sup>th</sup>). Phase Two of the Community Center project got underway on October 31<sup>st</sup>; TRG Construction is the contractor for this portion of the project.
- Significant resources were also dedicated to the Grand Opening celebration for the new Community Center. The well-attended event took place on December 11<sup>th</sup>.
- The primary focus of the City Clerk's Office during the quarter entailed planning and preparation for the Nominating Caucus and the election.
- The Information Systems staff devoted considerable time and effort to various aspects of the Community Center project. Duties included telephone and computer hook-ups and coordination of wiring projects not included in the City's contract with James F. Knott Construction. Division employees also assisted with preparations for the opening of the Computer Learning Center.
- Community and Government Liaison Suzanne Ludlow worked on a variety of legislative efforts, with particular attention paid to the issue of condominium conversion.
- The Roam Secure alert messaging system was installed and configured during the quarter. In October, Roam Secure trained City staff on how to use the messaging software.

- The annual audit of the City's General Purpose Financial Statements were completed and presented to the City Council on December 4<sup>th</sup>.
- Departmental staff organized a second Town Hall meeting on gang-related matters. The meeting, which was held on October 27<sup>th</sup>, focused on prevention and intervention. Panelists were Mr. Luis Cardona, Youth Violence Prevention Coordinator for Montgomery County Health and Human Services; Mr. Stephen Bedford, Community Superintendent, Montgomery County Public Schools; Mr. Terry Johnsson, Pastor for Youth, Sligo Seventh-Day Adventist Church; Candace Kattar, Executive Director, Identify, Inc.; and Gabriel Alborn, Executive Director, Latin-American Youth Center. One attendee, a former gang prosecutor in California, stated that the forum was the best on the issue that he had ever attended.
- The selection process for the position of Director of Public Works got underway. Alfred Lott, the previous Director, left in September to accept a position as City Manager of Albany, Georgia.

### **Communications**

- Events covered by City TV including the following: the Old Town Street Festival, the candidates' forum sponsored by the *Takoma Voice*, the second Town Hall meeting on gang-related issues, and the results of the City election.
- Snapshots episodes included a segment on emergency planning ("Be Prepared"), crime prevention, the Takoma Park Folk Festival, and highlights of the Old Town Street Festival.
- Communications Director Lonni Moffet gave a presentation regarding proposed federal franchising legislation at a joint meeting of Prince George's County and Montgomery County officials. Ms. Moffet also issued a press release outlining the City's opposition to the proposed legislation and distributed copies of the Council-adopted resolution to various governmental officials.
- After learning of increased pricing for the Granicus web-streaming software, staff represented the initiative to the City Council and received approval to move forward with its purchase.

### **Housing and Community Development**

- Departmental staff continued to provide support to various Council-appointed committees. Committee activities during the quarter included the following:
  - The Safe Roadways Committee focused on the development and refinement of its recommendations for the use of funding to address community-wide transit and pedestrian safety concerns.
  - The Façade Advisory Board began a review and comprehensive revision of the design standards to be used in Old Town and Takoma Junction.
  - The Montgomery College Neighborhood Advisory Committee formally organized and finalized a variety of operational matters.
  - The Arts and Humanities Commission organized the inaugural art exhibit in the new Community Center and refined its public art and exhibition policies. The work of 50 local artists was displayed as part of the inaugural exhibit.

- The Commission on Landlord and Tenant Affairs continued to hold hearings to address concerns between local landlords and tenants.

Staff also provided support to the Takoma Langley Crossroads CDA and the Old Takoma Business Association and its Main Street committees.

- Construction along Carroll Avenue and Laurel Avenue continued. Approximately 95 percent of the planned improvements were completed prior to the end of the 2005 construction season.
- Departmental staff, in partnership with the Capacity Building team, worked with residents of the eight rental facilities to form tenants' associations and to explore their rights to purchase under Takoma Park's Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Law. Assistance was provided to the following:
  - 251 Manor Circle (7 units)
  - 111 Lee Avenue (46 units)
  - 1001 - 1005 University Boulevard (20 units)
  - 641 Houston Avenue (28 units )
  - 8320 Roanoke Avenue (6 units)
  - 8316 Flower Avenue (6 units )
  - 7219 Flower Avenue (12 units)
  - 8324 Eastridge Avenue (6 units)
  - New Hampshire Towers (458 units)

A total of 589 households received assistance.

- Considerable support was provided to the residents of Hampshire Towers during the quarter. The residents were assisted in their efforts to form a tenant association, express their interest in purchasing the property, secure an attorney, and solicit and interview developers to work with the association in the purchase and redevelopment of the property.
- Construction on the second phase of the Metropolitan Branch Trail was initiated this fall by Montgomery County under contract with the County Conservation Corps. The County project included the following work: root pruning, poison ivy removal, construction of a retaining wall, and paving of a section of the trail between Buffalo Avenue and Fenton Street.
- Staff submitted a Community Legacy grant application in the amount of \$300,000. Proposed projects include \$50,000 for the capitalization of the recently established Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Revolving Loan Fund and \$250,000 for the final phase of the streetscape improvements on Carroll Avenue. Awards have not yet been announced.
- In October, a series of focus groups were held to learn about business and property owner needs with respect to economic development in the Long Branch/Takoma Park Enterprise Zone. The Enterprise Zone is located along the University Boulevard and New Hampshire Avenue corridor. Initial responses indicated that important issues include signage and façade improvements, increasing public and business safety, offering business skills training to smaller businesses, increasing opportunities for contact and information sharing between business owners, and streetscape improvement/beautification.
- On November 1<sup>st</sup>, the department hosted a Financial Incentives Fair for Takoma Park businesses located in the University Boulevard/New Hampshire Avenue and Piney Branch/Flower Avenue corridors. Speakers from the State, County, and City provided information on tax incentives, business training, security, and other related business resources.

- A series of workshops focusing on pedestrian safety concerns were held throughout Takoma Park during the month of October. The observations and recommendations of workshop participants are being evaluated and will be considered for implementation in 2006.
- Departmental staff served on the planning committee and assisted in the organization of the third annual Montgomery County Housing Fair. Over 50 exhibitors provided information on first time home buying, rental assistance programs, and consumer protection tips to participants.
- Proposals and bids were solicited for the purchase and redevelopment of City-owned properties located in the Long Branch neighborhood (8425 and 8435 Piney Branch Road). The results of this effort will be presented to the City Council for its consideration in February 2006.
- The City obtained final approval of the design and location of certain proposed signage from the Historic Preservation Commission. Sign approval is still required from the State Highway Administration for other signs.

### Library

- The College Bound program series offered information on topics including the selection of a college, financing options, testing strategies, and options for students with learning disabilities. The series took place in September and October.
- On October 28<sup>th</sup>, Friends of Mike Morrissey presented Library Director Ellen Robbins and Friends of the Library Board President Sonja Kueppers with a check for \$5,000. The funds were raised from a golf tournament held on October 3<sup>rd</sup> in memory of the former Takoma Park resident and book lover. The tournament was the fourth one held in memory of Mr. Morrissey. To date, the group's donations to the Takoma Park Library total more than \$15,000.
- The Children's Room was filled to capacity on November 16<sup>th</sup> as award-winning radio producers Neenah Ellis, Marika Partridge, Emily Hanford, and David Schulman discussed their work in a special program organized and moderated by Steve Mencher. Nearly 50 people attended "Radio Rules," billed as a preview event for the Takoma Park Film Festival.
- The Library staff and the Friends of the Library provided advice, encouragement and support for the fourth annual Takoma Park Film Festival. This year's festival, which took place November 18<sup>th</sup> through 20<sup>th</sup>, included five screenings and a range of professional, amateur, and student produced films.
- The Friends of the Library, in conjunction with Library staff, initiated a new book club on November 30<sup>th</sup>. The club, which meets in the new Community Center, was initiated by local poet, educator, and publisher Merrill Leffler. It will meet on a bi-monthly basis, and the Friends of the Library have kindly agreed to purchase multiple copies of each title to be discussed. *The Color of Water* by James McBride was the discussion of the club's November meeting. The group chose *The Tortilla Curtain* by T.C. Boyle for its second meeting, which will take place on February 1<sup>st</sup>.
- On December 11<sup>th</sup>, one public access room in the new Computer Learning Center opened. Staffed by Phil Shapiro from 12:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. each week day, the room offers Internet access and word processing on 10 computers to anyone ages eight and older. There is no formal sign-up as of yet. In the future, Takoma Park Library cardholders will sign on using their cards, and Internet use will be filtered for those under the age of 16. When the second public access room opens, a total of 20 computers will be available for group projects, guidance and instruction

(offered in Room A), and individual users who prefer a quiet atmosphere (offered in Room B). Evening and weekend hours will be added in the future, as well as classes. Already, seniors are being taught Internet basics on Wednesday mornings. Children enrolled in the Recreation Department's After School program will soon receive some Web instruction as well.

## **Police**

- Considerable resources were devoted to preparation for the on-site visit of the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA). A team of assessors conducted an on-site review of the department between October 23<sup>rd</sup> and October 26<sup>th</sup>. In addition to inspecting files and observing the work of staff, the on-site team received comments from the community during a public hearing and a public call-in period. At the conclusion of the on-site visit, the team rendered a favorable recommendation to the Commission that the police department be awarded accredited status. The recommendation will be formally considered by the Commission in March 2006.
- During the quarter, two certified police officers were hired and began their field training with veteran officers. Two non-certified individuals were hired to fill officer vacancies and started their academy training at the University of Maryland Police Department.
- The department replenished its inventory of steering wheel locking devices and is again offering them for sale to the community at the reduced rate of \$10.
- Police officers completed a minimum of 18 hours of State mandated in-service training.
- Several neighborhoods were targeted for high visibility patrol during the quarter. Officers patrolling on foot, bicycle and/or vehicle patrolled the OTRA neighborhood in an effort to dispel the correlation of crime and Daylight Savings Time. Officers also increased their visibility and traffic enforcement in the Flower/Piney Branch neighborhood with overtime money allotted through the Weed and Seed program.
- The quarter was a busy one for the Community Oriented Policing (COP) Team. Activities included the following:
  - The Team held meetings for managers of area apartment complexes on October 27<sup>th</sup>. The meeting offered an opportunity for the parties to exchange information about a variety of matters.
  - Team members were involved in pedestrian safety meetings and the Heat Team for the CSAFE area.
  - Sergeant Gilbert attended a meeting of business owners in the X Sector who have expressed interest in developing a business association, including a Business Watch program.
  - Team members participated in the Halloween parade.

## **Public Works**

- Street improvement work during the quarter included concrete curb, gutter and driveway apron replacement on Holton Lane, Dogwood Avenue and Park Avenue. Roadway milling and paving for these streets will take place during the spring of 2006.

- An extended curb was installed at the southeast corner of the intersection of Park Avenue and Philadelphia Avenue. The curb extension narrows the intersection to provide easier crossing for pedestrians. Brick pavers fill one-half of the extension. A tree will be planted in the remaining area in the spring of 2006.
- The City's indefinite quantities contract expired in November. Eight vendors responded to the City's Request for Bid. An award recommendation will be presented to the City Council for its consideration in February 2006.
- A storm water management project was completed on Heather Avenue. The work included the installation of 350 linear feet of pipe, as well as two storm basins and one curb inlet. The pipe had badly deteriorated, causing damage to private property. The new pipe installation redirects the flow from an inlet on Heather Alley to Heather Avenue and then continues by pipe to the inlet at the intersection of Heather Avenue and Sligo Creek Parkway.
- As a joint project between the Friends of Sligo Creek and the City, the first rain garden was installed at Forest Park near Elm Avenue. The Friends of Sligo Creek provided the plan design and installation. The City paid for plants and stones and provided mulch for the project. The City's cost for the project was just over \$2,000. The rain garden's installation was Phase One of the project. A plan to add an additional rain garden in the upper portion of the park will be proposed for FY07.
- Several facility projects were completed, including the cleaning, painting and stucco repair at BY Morrison Park in Takoma Junction, the adjustment and addition of security lights to the Carriage House on Tulip Avenue, and the repair of all exterior security lights at the Municipal Building and library.
- The annual vacuum leaf collection began on November 7<sup>th</sup> and was scheduled to continue through December 23<sup>rd</sup>. Pick-up in most of the City was handled on an unscheduled basis. Service on six streets with high traffic volume was provided on two scheduled collection days.
- Curtis Pumphrey was promoted to the position of Supervisor of the Right-of-Way Division effective November 7<sup>th</sup>.
- The City held its second annual Electronics Recycling Event on November 12<sup>th</sup>. Participation was high, with 14 tons of electronic equipment collected by Subtractions Inc. The program is underwritten by the Maryland Environmental Service, which covers two-thirds of its cost.

## **Recreation**

- Departmental staff devoted considerable time and resources to preparation and planning for the opening of the new Community Center. Due to construction delays, some programs had to be postponed until the winter.
- Funds provided through the generosity of the Takoma Foundation were utilized to purchase equipment, furniture, and supplies for the Art Room, meeting rooms, the Senior Room, and the video/music lab in the Community Center.
- Departmental staff offered activities/demonstrations and logistical support for the Community Center Grand Opening celebration on December 11<sup>th</sup>.

- With the commencement of Phase Two of the Community Center project, the main office of the Recreation Department moved to the trailers in the rear parking lot. Registrations are accepted at the trailer during the work day and at the front desk after hours. Departmental staff is processing many requests for use of the new space, implementing the guidelines set forth by the City Council.